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ABSTRACT

Twelve lesson plans form a unit on voter education for high school students. Objectives for the unit are that students will register and vote in upcoming elections, participate in election campaigns, and increase their knowledge of the political system. Topics of the lesson plans, which are designed to cover a 12-week period, include the following: candidates and issues; political party structure; political decision making; voter behavior, rights, and procedures; simulated elections; campaign involvement; and the importance of voting. Students role-play city council members and legislators, examine special interests of organized groups, establish an election information and issue analysis center, research the media's role in elections, and examine how party platforms evolve and compromises are made. Students also research the nominating procedures for national political parties, election laws, and national and local election results. Each lesson plan provides objectives, activities, discussion questions, and resources. (KC)

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VOTER EDUCATION LESSON PLANS

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In 1974, the political education program was validated as successful, cost-effective, and exportable by the standards and guidelines of the United States Office of Education. As a result, the program is now funded through ESEA, Title III as a demonstration site to provide dissemination materials and services to interested educators.

VOTER EDUCATION LESSON PLANS

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VOTER EDUCATION LESSON PLANS

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VOTER EDUCATION LESSON PLANS

INTRODUCTION

> "The right of citizens of the United States, who are 18 years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of age."
>
> Amendment XXVI
> United States Constitution

A new constituency was created in America following ratification of the 26th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution which lowered the voting age to eighteen.

Many obstacles must be overcome to insure maximum use of this right by young people. Studies have shown that vague, inconsistent and restrictive registration procedures, unresponsive public officials, and a sense of apathy among the new voters impede the process of responsible political participation.

The common denominator in each of the above obstacles appears to be insufficient voter education and a general misunderstanding of the political process. To correct this situation, aggressive and effective voter education of the new constituency is necessary. It would seem appropriate to initiate this effort in the school system.

Recognizing this need for voter education in 1972, the New Jersey State Department of Education commissioned IPLE and the Educational Improvement Center (both existing Title III programs of the State Department) to establish a method whereby the maximum number of eligible New Jersey high school students would become registered and would participate in the electoral process.

The Institute conducted a series of state-wide workshops and prepared and distributed various voter educational materials. Concurrently, this curriculum guide was developed to meet the goal of an educated voting constituency of young people.

This guide provides detailed lesson plans incorporating both consultant prepared materials and those developed by IPLE and EIC staffs. The guide should be used in conjunction with the IPLE Voter Education Manual and supplemented by IPLE booklets and filmstrips. (See separate list.)

Overall Course Objectives

1. Eighty-five percent of all eligible participating students will register and vote in the upcoming election.

2. Fifty-five percent of all participating students will actively participate as workers in the election campaign.

3. Ninety-five percent of all participating students will indicate by pre-testing and post-testing a statistically significant increase of knowledge concerning the political system and campaigning.

COURSE CALENDAR

This schedule is **for your guidance only**. It may be adjusted to meet individual needs and situations. However, before making adjustments, review this lesson plan guide in its entirety and the suggested supplemental materials. Each lesson plan gives objectives, recommended activities and suggested resources.

The following calendar recommends a time line for those teaching the entire IPLE Voter Education kit.

			Day
Lesson Plan	One	Mid-September	1
" "	Two	September	2-3
" "	Three	September	3-4
" "	Four	September	5-8
" "	Five	September	9-10
" "	Six	September	10-12
" "	Seven	September October	11-14 1-3
" "	Eight	October	4-5
" "	Nine	October	6-12
" "	Ten	October	13-20
" "	Eleven	November	1-2
" "	Twelve	November	3-9

Suggested dateline for specified activities:

Activity		Day
1) Voter Registration Motivational Assembly	September	11-12
2) Voter Registration Drive (actual registration of students)	September	12-13
3) Simulated Student Election	October	11-12
4) Political Education Assembly--Candidates	November	1-2

LESSON ONE

VOTING: A REFLECTION OF SELF-INTEREST

WHY IS VOTING IMPORTANT?
WHAT DOES VOTING REFLECT?

OBJECTIVES:

1. Participating students will be able to discuss the major goals and topics presented during the voter-education course.

2. Participating students will complete a test as part of the pre/post testing evaluation.

3. Participating students will be able to list three examples representing the manner by which self-interest affects the political decision-making process.

4. Participating students will be able to list three examples of political situations which show how a legislator's vote reflects the views of his constituency.

5. Participating students will be able to list three examples of political situations which reflect the manner by which voting implements political self-interest.

6. Participating students will be able to present the expansion of voting constituencies in the United States by listing, in order, the year in which each group received the vote (e.g., women, 18-year olds).

7. Participating students will be able to discuss the judicial decision "one man one vote" and its subsequent impact on reapportionment and voting patterns and representation.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Teacher prepares, presents and discusses with class the major goals of the course and topics which will be examined. Students will develop and add goals they believe important.

2. Teacher prepares and administers a pre-test which, when later compared to results of a post-test, will indicate objectively student learning. (This pre/post test procedure is optional).

3. Teacher develops with students the concept that self-interest affects political decision making; people usually do what is best for their own self-interest. This concept may be developed through both the presentation of examples and the use of role playing.

   A. EXAMPLE - Teacher should explain the process of self-interest by using the example of a union leader who is elected to an office, such as Senator. Presentation would then develop concerning the probability of this individual voting for legislation which favors union members. What is the self-interest of the union member? What kind of legislation reflects this self-interest?

      Additional examples should then be provided by students through the development of class discussion.

   B. ROLE PLAYING - Select a student, preferably by having one volunteer, to assume the role of a recently retired fire chief who has just been elected to City Council.

      Select a second student to assume the role of a woman who is vice-president of Landing Construction Company, and who has also been elected to the Council.

      Develop a situation where each student, as a council member reacts to a proposed piece of legislation in terms of their own self-interest. The bill to be considered is: That a $700,000 contract be given to Landing Construction Company for the building of low-income housing despite the fact that 1) Landing Construction is known to build houses which in the past have not always provided sufficient fire escape and control measures, 2) Wheeler Construction, which is known to be superior in building and fire prevention measures to Landing has offered to do the job for $50,000 more, and 3) many town residents, including the firemen's union, are altogether opposed to low-income housing.

      In actual politics, both individuals would probably abstain from voting (because it is in their self-interests to do so and most states now have financial conflict of interest laws). For classroom purposes, each may act as a council spokesman.

What are the "self-interests" of the council members?
Why is it in the self-interest of the council members to abstain?
If there are several self-interests or conflicting ones, which should be given highest priority?
Can you determine if a "self-interest" is "right" or "wrong?"

4. Teacher develops with students an understanding of how a legislator's vote may reflect his constituency and its views.

   A. EXAMPLE - Teacher presents example of a legislator, who in the past has not been concerned with the issue of school busing to achieve racial integration, but makes an issue of his objection to it as part of his campaign speeches after reading several opinion polls of registered voters within his district which indicate their overwhelming opposition to forced busing.

   B. ROLE PLAYING - One selected student will assume the role of a legislator considering the issue of wage control. In the past he has been known to vote in whichever way his voting constituency has indicated support.

      Ask for student's (legislator's) opinion (vote) on issue after reading the following:

      1) A memo from his chief advisor that 84 percent of the people are opposed to wage control.

      2) A second memo, stating that the first was a mistake and that only 46 percent are opposed to wage control, 40 percent favor it, and 14 percent are undecided or neutral.

      3) A memo from Washington stating that the President will go on the air tomorrow night in an attempt to gain all out support of wage controls.

      4) An opinion poll following the President's speech stating that 60 percent of his constituents support wage controls.

5) An opinion poll three weeks prior to the election indicating that 75 percent of the American public are absolutely opposed to any wage controls despite a 95 percent cost of living increase.

C. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1) What is the major concern of a politician in office?

2) What do you consider a valid reflector of public opinion?

3) What are some methods for identifying the attitude of registered voters in a voting district?

4) Is it the function of the legislator to do what the people want or what the legislator feels is right?

5. Teacher develops concept of citizen action representing self-interest by presentation of examples and class discussions.

A. EXAMPLES - Teacher presents first example, that of a group of citizens opposed to proposed higher tax rates. The prevention of higher tax rates is their self-interest. They organize and vote against taxes. This act of voting represents the implementation of their self-interest.

Teacher then develops with students additional examples.

B. DISCUSSION - Specifically, teacher lists several interest groups on the blackboard and then students suggest legislation which these groups might support and vote for in order to implement their self-interest.

GROUP	SELF-INTEREST	LEGISLATION
AFL-CIO	Pleasant working conditions; ability to lead a materially comfortable life.	High wages, better working conditions, lower food prices, shorter work week.
League of Women Voters	More people registered and voting.	More liberal voting laws, voter registration by mail.
Stockholders of General Motors	More profits	Import taxes on foreign cars, lower minimum working wage, wage controls.
Motor vehicle inspectors	Highway safety	Safety-belts required by law.

C. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1) What determines the self-interest of an individual or group?

2) What self-interests do students have?

3) What might be "self-interests" of parents?

6. Teacher presents on the blackboard and/or mimeographed sheet a chronology of the expansion of the voting franchise in the United States.

GROUP	LEGISLATION
White Land-Owning Males	U. S. Constitution
White Non-Land Owning Males	Repeal of "Property Qualifications" in the States
Black Male Citizens (then referred to as Negroes)	15th Amendment 1869
Women	19th Amendment 1920
18-Year Olds	26th Amendment 1971

7. Students should research the impact of "one man one vote" in their community. Did reapportionment take place? Has there been a change in representation?

RESOURCES:

1. A legislator (assemblyman or council person) - invite person to address the class on how he determines the views of his constituency and how he reacts to those views.

2. A member of citizen advocate group - invite a person to discuss its particular self-interest and how the group seeks to influence public policy.

3. Porter, Kirk H. A History of Suffrage in the United States. AMS Press, 1971.

LESSON TWO

CANDIDATES AND ISSUES

WHO ARE THE CANDIDATES?
WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

(Election Information Center and the Issue Analysis Center)

OBJECTIVES:

1. Participating students will be able to identify the offices and candidates in the election.

2. Participating students will be able to identify, in detail, the process by which strategy and issues develop during the campaign.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Students will establish and operate an Election Information Center and Issue Analysis Center.

2. Students will analyze major issues of their choice and present panel discussions on them.

3. Students will research the media's role in the election and interview one or more representatives from the media. Recommended questions:

   How are candidates covered?
   Are all candidates given equal treatment?
   What role should the media play?
   Does the media, rather than the candidate, select issues?

4. Students will determine how candidates develop their image and why through the following role playing:

   ROLE PLAYING - Two students, selected at random, will assume the roles of 1) a campaign director for a candidate whose party is controlled by mainly corporate interests, and 2) a campaign director for a candidate whose party is controlled mainly by working class and labor union interests.

   After considering their respective special interests, each student will be asked to identify what image should be projected of the candidate to the public, and develop logical procedures using the media to accomplish this image-making!

RESOURCES:

1. IPLE booklets:

   Election Information Center and Issue Analysis Center.

   Subtle Bias of the Media.

2. Media representative and candidate - invite both to discuss image-making and issue development in the campaign.

3. McGinnis, Joe. Selling of the President, 1968. New York. Trident Press, 1969.

LESSON THREE

POLITICAL PARTY STRUCTURE

WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE OF POLITICAL PARTIES?
(Local, County, State)

OBJECTIVES:

1. Participating students will be able to show the relationship of local, county, and state political organizations.

2. Participating students will be able to list the functions of a local, county and state committeeman or committeewoman.

3. Participating students, either through a written examination or oral presentation, will be able to describe the step-by-step method by which influence is achieved within the party structure.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Teacher presents on the blackboard or on a mimeographed sheet, the structural relationship existing between the local, county and state political party organizations.

2. Through a case study, students will understand the role of political power as exemplified by Richard Daley of Chicago. Students will compare and contrast this situation to their local community.

3. Students will identify and interview local committee people to determine:

   How is a committee person selected?
   What power does he/she have?
   How independent can a committee person be?
   Is "bossism" prevalent?

RESOURCES:

1. Booklets: Understanding Political Parties, IPLE.
   Political Parties in New Jersey, LWV.
   Publications of the political parties.

2. Books: Royko, Mike, Boss - Richard J. Daley of Chicago, E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., New York, N. Y., 1971.
   Steinberg, Alfred, The Bosses, The Macmillan Co., New York, N.Y., 1972.

3. Political party committeemen and committeewomen - interview and request as guest speakers.

LESSON FOUR

POLITICAL PARTY STRUCTURE (NATIONAL)

WHAT IS THE ORGANIZATION AND ROLE OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL?

OBJECTIVES:

1. Participating students will be able to list by position the members of the National Party Committee for both the Democratic and Republican National Committees.

2. Participating students will be able to state the manner in which national party officials are chosen.

3. Participating students will be able to explain, orally, the relationship (in terms of power and control) between state organizations and the National Committee.

4. Participating students will be able to explain how decisions are made affecting party policy and specifically, how a party platform is developed and what affect it has on legislation.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Teacher will provide basic information on the national committee structure and the selection of officers.

2. Students will research and will be able to compare and contrast party structure at each level, the characteristics (professional and personal) of the leadership at each level, the responsibilities and power at each level. Students might research the "rise and fall" of Ms. Jean Westwood, Democratic National Chairman.

3. Students through role playing will show how party platforms evolve and how compromises are made to assure wide base support.

4. Students will research and will be able to compare and contrast the national party platforms, and determine how candidates treated various planks and what "planks" were implemented.

RESOURCES:

1. Political Party Platforms.

2. Understanding Political Parties, IPLE booklet.

3. News articles on political party leadership and positions.

LESSON FIVE

POLITICAL DECISION MAKING

WHAT ARE THE INFLUENCES ON POLITICAL DECISIONS?

OBJECTIVES:

1. Participating students will be able to explain "influence" on political decision-making particularly the role of the lobbyist.

2. Participating students will be able to identify some of the factors influencing legislative policy.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Students will identify those lobbyists who actively lobbied for a major piece of legislation and explain the techniques used.

2. Students will invite a lobbyist to discuss his/her role and method of operation, and will question the lobbyist on the extent of his influence, the amount of money used, and the ethics involved.

   What are the laws controlling lobbyists?

   Is there a need for more control?

   Is it justifiable to use material means to influence decision-makers?

   Has the lobbyist usurped the democratic process and is legislation now being made by lobbyists rather than by elected representatives?

3. Students will use the IPLE simulation game Lobbying.

4. Students will lead a discussion to identify factors affecting political decision-making. One student draws a chart on the blackboard using a selected example, such as forced school busing. As students provide appropriate answers, the chart should be filled.

SCHOOL BUSING

FACTOR	LEGISLATOR'S ACTIONS, REACTIONS	END RESULT
(1) Government conducting experimental school busing	(1) Remain neutral	(1) Busing experiment begins
(2) Riots occur in 90% of all bused schools	(2) Become negative	(2) Attempts occur to end busing
(3) Opinion polls show that 99% of voting constituents oppose busing	(3) Makes issue of opposition	(3) School busing appears to be ended
(4) Organized lobbyists oppose busing	(4) Demands end of busing	(4) Busing is ended

C. QUESTIONS TO BE EXPLORED:

1) Should legislator vote against busing if his constituency is against it?

2) How should legislator determine constituency's views?

3) As a legislator, would you accept a campaign contribution of $50,000 from the United Busing Corporation?

LESSON SIX

VOTER BEHAVIOR

WHAT AFFECT DO POLITICAL PRESENTATIONS AND CAMPAIGN TECHNIQUES HAVE ON VOTER BEHAVIOR?

OBJECTIVES:

1. Participating students will be able to identify the effect of a political presentation on the voting behavior of a group of people.

2. Participating students will be able to identify the affect of campaign techniques on election results.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Students will schedule an assembly at which several candidates will speak. The audience should be polled as to their candidate preference prior to the assembly. Immediately after the assembly, the audience should be polled again to determine if candidate preference has changed.

2. Students will conduct a community "straw vote" and compare those results with the actual election outcome.

RESOURCES:

IPLE Booklets;

1. Community Research Techniques

2. Political Education Assembly

LESSON SEVEN

VOTING RIGHTS AND PROCEDURES

HOW DO CITIZENS BECOME PART OF THE ELECTORATE?
(Voter Registration and Election Procedures).

OBJECTIVES:

1. Participating students will be able to list the proper step-by-step procedure for registering to vote.

2. Participating students will be able to list the proper procedures and methods of voting.

3. Eighty-five percent of participating students, who are legally eligible, will register to vote.

4. Participating students will conduct a voter registration drive for the eligible student population of the school and/or community.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Students will research voter registration and election laws in their state.

2. Students will conduct a voter registration campaign in the school and community using professional techniques.

RESOURCES:

1. County Clerk - invite clerk to discuss voter registration and election law.

2. IPLE booklets:

   Hello, Are You Registered?
   Voter Registration and Canvassing.
   High School Voter Registration.

3. IPLE filmstrips:

   Voter Registration and Rights.
   How to Use a Voting Machine.

LESSON EIGHT

STUDENT SIMULATED ELECTIONS

WHAT ARE THE OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR A STUDENT ELECTION?

OBJECTIVE:

Participating students will be able to list in detail all procedures necessary in the conduct of a campaign and election.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Students will conduct an election using the format suggested in the IPLE booklet, Student Elections.

2. Students will analyze the election results and will identify and discuss those procedures which emerge as effective campaign techniques.

   What methods of campaigning were employed by successful candidates?

   How did they differ from those techniques used by unsuccessful candidates?

RESOURCE:

Student Elections, IPLE booklet.

LESSON NINE

Student Campaign Involvement

WHAT PROCEDURES AND TECHNIQUES MUST BE ACQUIRED FOR SUCCESSFUL STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS?

OBJECTIVES:

1. Participating students will be able to develop an outline of procedures and techniques for the conduct of a campaign.

2. Fifty-five percent of all participating students will work actively in an election campaign either for a candidate or a ballot measure.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Students will study material in the IPLE booklet, Political Campaign Techniques in preparation for participating in local campaigns. Student volunteers will be coordinated through the Election Information Center.

2. Students will role play campaign procedures (e.g., telephoning, precinct canvassing) to prepare for actual activities.

3. Students will keep a log describing their campaign involvement, report periodically to the class and compare experiences.

RESOURCES:

1. Actual campaign observations and experiences.

2. Political Campaign Techniques, IPLE booklet.

LESSON TEN

Nomination and Election of a President

WHAT ROLE DO THE PARTY CONVENTIONS AND THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE HAVE IN THE ELECTION OF A U. S. PRESIDENT?

OBJECTIVES:

1. Participating students will be able to describe the procedure by which presidential and vice-presidential candidates receive party nominations.

2. Participating students will be able to describe the structure and function of the Electoral College.

3. Participating students will be able to identify the arguments for and against abolishment of the Electoral College.

4. Participating students will be able to present alternatives to presidential election by the Electoral College process and supporting arguments for each alternative.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Students will research the nominating procedure of the national political parties in selecting presidential candidates and interview convention delegates.

   A. How are convention delegates chosen?

   B. What opportunity is there for a political novice to be a delegate?

   C. What is the role of delegates?

   D. How independent can delegates be?

   E. Is the presidential nominating convention a "circus disguised as democracy?"

   F. What changes might be made?

   G. Should the convention procedure be abolished and a national presidential primary election be held?

   H. What are the pro and con arguments for a national presidential primary?

2. Students will research the historical reasons for establishing the Electoral College and its structure.

3. Students will simulate a meeting of state electors.

   A. How are electors chosen?

   B. How independent are the electors?

4. Students will conduct a debate on the pro and con arguments for abolishing the Electoral College.

5. Students will discuss the various proposed alternatives to the Electoral College.

RESOURCES:

1. Choosing the President, LWV of U. S., 1972.
2. Congressional proposals concerning the Electoral College reform.
3. Party delegates to national party nominating convention.
4. White, Theodore, The Making of a President - 1972.
5. Who Should Elect the President, LWV of U. S.
6. Electoral College, IPLE booklet.

LESSON ELEVEN

SELECTION OF STATE AND LOCAL CANDIDATES

WHO SELECTS LOCAL AND STATE CANDIDATES?

OBJECTIVES:

1. Participating students will be able to describe the various methods whereby local and state office candidates are selected.
2. Participating students will be able to compare and contrast local and state candidate selection procedures with the national party nominating conventions.
3. Participating students will be able to develop criteria and qualifications for office seekers.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Students will research election law to determine how a person becomes a candidate (e.g., self announced, party selected, primary election winner).
2. Students will interview local political party leaders to ascertain their views on how candidates should be selected and what criteria these leaders use in selecting a candidate to support.

3. Students will interview local candidates on their motivations for seeking office and the characteristics they believe necessary for victory.

4. Students will analyze background and qualifications of successful candidates to determine what characteristics (if any) reoccur. Students should then develop criteria and qualifications of "a successful candidate."

RESOURCES:

1. Candidates

2. County Clerk/Election Code

3. Political party leaders.

4. Party Structure, IPLE booklet.

LESSON TWELVE

YOUR VOTE: ITS IMPORTANCE

WILL YOUR VOTE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

OBJECTIVES:

1. Participating students will be able to discuss historical examples where one vote or a small number of votes made a difference in the results of an election.

2. Participating students will develop an insight into the numerical significance and potential influence of the youth vote.

3. Eighty-five percent of the participating students eligible to register and to cast a vote will do so.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Students will research national and local election results for examples where a small number of votes decided an election.

2. Students will research population data on the potential youth vote and find examples in which the youth vote made a difference in the outcome of an election.

3. Students will develop arguments in favor of youth participation in the electoral process and will role play with students taking an advesary position.

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4. Students will be personally involved in registration drives, election campaigns and in the electoral process.

RESOURCES:

1. Diamond, F. and Pfleiger F., Civics for Citizens, "Does One Vote Make A Difference", 1970.

2. IPLE booklets;

   Hello, Are You Registered?
   High School Voter Registration.
   Political Campaign Techniques.
   Voter Registration and Canvassing.

3. Kahn, Tom, American Youth-Which Way Now? 1970

4. Readers Guide to Periodical Literature for articles on impact of youth vote.

5. U. S. Almanac - 1975.

6. Film: The Young Vote - Power, Politics and Participation. McDonald, 1972.

7. Filmstrip: Baker Vs Carr - One Man, One Vote. Doubleday Multimedia. Santa Ana, California, 1972.